United Nations A/56/400

General Assembly

Distr.: General
25 September 2001

Original: English

Fifty-sixth session
Agenda item 74 (n)
General and complete disarmament

Reducing nuclear danger

Note by the Secretary-General*

1. In paragraph 5 of its resolution 55/33 N of 20 November 2000, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek inputs from the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters on information with regard to specific measures that would significantly reduce the risk of nuclear war and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session.

2. Pursuant to that request, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith the summary of the discussions held on the subject by the Advisory Board at its thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh sessions, as conveyed to him by the Chairman of the Board. The discussions were based on papers prepared by certain members of the Board, which are contained in annexes I and II to the summary of the discussions. The membership of the Board is set out in annex III.

* The present report contains a summary of the discussion on the subject by the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters at its two sessions held respectively from 31 January to 2 February and from 25 to 27 July 2001.

01-55079 (E) 081001

Summary of the discussions of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters on specific measures that would significantly reduce the risk of nuclear war, as approved by the Chairman of the Advisory Board on 30 August 2001

Summary

All members of the Board concurred that nuclear danger would be eliminated only when nuclear weapons are eliminated. There was broad agreement on seven recommendations for reducing nuclear dangers that should receive particular emphasis. The Board also discussed a wide assortment of other measures and approaches which received varying degrees of support. The Board believed it would be useful to continue its discussions on the subject.

1. On 20 November 2000, the General Assembly approved resolution 55/33 N, in which it requested the Secretary-General, within existing resources: "to continue to seek inputs from the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters on information with regard to specific measures that would significantly reduce the risk of nuclear war, including the proposal contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration for convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session".

2. The Board held its thirty-sixth session in New York from 31 January to 2 February 2001 and its thirty-seventh session at Geneva from 25 to 27 July 2001. At each of the sessions, the Board held an exchange of views on specific measures that might reduce the risk of nuclear war. Five papers prepared by certain members of the Board (see annexes I and II) set the framework for the Board's discussions on the item.

3. While the members felt that many of the items enumerated in paragraph 13 below would require further discussion at a future session, there was broad agreement in the Board on seven recommendations:

(a) The members urged the Secretary-General to promote a dialogue on cooperative security on a regional and a global level as an important means of advancing disarmament objectives, and thereby, international peace and security;

(b) With respect to the proposal in the Millennium Report (A/54/2000, para. 253) for an international conference on eliminating nuclear dangers, the Board recommended that the Secretary-General may wish to urge Member States to undertake certain preliminary political and technical preparations for such a conference, to be convened after the emergence of an international consensus to hold such event;

(c) The Board encouraged the Secretary-General to promote, especially in his consultations with Member States, the de-alerting of nuclear weapons;

(d) The Board also urged the Secretary-General to encourage and promote, through his consultations with Member States, the review of nuclear doctrines;

(e) The Board also suggested that the Secretary-General encourage Member States to pursue the elimination of all tactical nuclear weapons of the two major nuclear-weapon States while, as a first step towards their total elimination, drastically reducing and removing such weapons to central storage;

(f) The Board asked the Secretary-General to work with Member States to promote transparency at the global and regional levels, particularly with respect to weapons and weapons facilities, and postures and doctrines;

(g) The Board reaffirmed that programmes of education and training on the dangers of nuclear weapons would foster an informed world public opinion that would be able to exercise a positive influence on the political will to eliminate nuclear weapons and create a climate conducive to nuclear disarmament measures.

4. At its thirty-sixth session, the Board considered three discussion papers (see annex I) which addressed the following specific measures to reduce nuclear danger: deep reductions, de-alerting, and a variety of confidence-building measures among States with large nuclear arsenals; de-alerting and enhanced transparency of States with smaller nuclear arsenals; efforts by nuclear possessors to assist in defusing regional disputes; controls against unauthorized or accidental uses; an emphasis at the United Nations on the principle of accountability for progress in disarmament; a review of nuclear doctrines; the elimination of tactical nuclear weapons; cultivation of a norm against the use of nuclear weapons; preparatory work on an international conference on reducing nuclear danger; high-level meetings of the Security Council on disarmament issues; a ban on the use of weapons-usable nuclear materials for peaceful purposes; and annual prizes for news media reporting on disarmament issues. At its thirty-seventh session, the Board considered two additional discussion papers (see annex II) which covered additional issues, including: the health and environmental damages from the testing, production, operation and maintenance of nuclear weapons; the significant limitations of missile defence as a means of eliminating nuclear danger, relative to the security gained from global nuclear disarmament; the need for greater attention to verification of disarmament commitments and the development of measures to deal with violations thereof; the need for an emphasis on public education; the need for multilateral efforts to advance "cooperative security" rather than the unilateral interests of individual States; controls against the development of new generations of nuclear weapons;

controls against regional imbalances of conventional forces; and improvements in the command and control of nuclear forces.

5. As a result of its deliberations in both sessions, the Board agreed that: (a) nuclear weapons not only remain a serious threat to international peace and security at the global level, despite the end of the cold war, but are posing serious dangers at the regional level as well; (b) the perpetuation and growth of these dangers only increases the risk of the eventual use of these weapons; and (c) the global threat from nuclear weapons is growing in the world today. The Board concluded that this threat underscores the need for new measures both globally and regionally to reduce nuclear dangers.

6. Most members continued to support the proposal made in the Millennium Report for the convening of a major international conference that would help to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers (A/54/2000, para. 253). While the Board agreed that the necessary international consensus to convene such a conference had not yet materialized, the members believed that certain incremental steps could promote the development of such a consensus and the convening of such a conference at the appropriate time. These steps could include certain technical and political preparatory measures, including the creation of "technical working groups" to examine specific issues — such as deep reductions, de-alerting, no first use, a review of nuclear doctrines, and confidence-building measures — to be addressed at such a conference.

7. All members of the Board concurred that it was fundamental to stress that the danger of nuclear war would be eliminated only when nuclear weapons were eliminated. Thus the Board encouraged the Secretary-General to assign this goal a high priority in his consultations with Member States and with individuals and groups in civil society.

8. There was, in summary, broad agreement in the Board that emphasis should be given to the following measures for reducing nuclear dangers:

(a) Promoting a wide-ranging international dialogue on cooperative security;

(b) Preliminary political and technical measures in preparation for the possibility of convening, at the appropriate time, a major international conference that would help to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers;

(c) De-alerting of nuclear weapons;

(d) Review of nuclear doctrines;

(e) Further reduction of tactical nuclear weapons as an integral part of the nuclear arms reduction and disarmament process;

(f) Enhancing security at a global and a regional level by promoting increased transparency of all nuclear weapons programmes;

(g) Creating a climate for implementing nuclear disarmament measures. Programmes of education and training on the dangers of nuclear weapons would foster an informed world public opinion that would be able to exercise a positive influence on the political will to eliminate nuclear weapons.

9. The following specific measures and broad approaches received varying degrees of support from the Board:

(a) Preventing the further proliferation of nuclear weapons;

(b) Banning the use of nuclear weapons;

(c) Changing military doctrines to no first use of nuclear weapons;

(d) Withdrawing all nuclear weapons deployed abroad back to their owner's territory;

(e) Eliminating all but a very small stock of reserve warheads;

(f) Creating additional nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned;

(g) Providing unconditional negative security assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon States;

(h) Abolishing the policy and practice of nuclear sharing and a nuclear umbrella;

(i) Reducing the number of nuclear-weapon systems, including eliminating multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles;

(j) Enhancing nuclear transparency at the global and regional levels, particularly with respect to facilities and nuclear postures;

(k) Keeping nuclear submarines deployed in a mode that would make the firing of nuclear ballistic missiles from close range on depressed trajectories more difficult;

(l) De-targeting;

(m) Shaping communication practices so as to make immediate strikes difficult or impossible;

(n) Keeping nuclear forces in a low status of alert;

(o) De-mating nuclear warheads from launchers;

(p) Removing essential parts from launchers or nuclear warheads (such as batteries, fuel, connection cables and computers);

(q) Promoting confidence-building measures between neighbouring States in territorial conflict, including the disengagement of forces, stationing of neutral (peacekeeping) forces on either side of the demarcation line, and refraining from supporting armed non-State actors within the contested territory.

Annex I

Discussion papers prepared by Harald Müller, Arundhati Ghose and Boris Pyadyshev and presented on 1 February 2001 at the thirty-sixth session of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters in New York

A. Reducing nuclear dangers: additional considerations on the responsibilities of the possessors of nuclear weapons

by Harald Müller

The following considerations are based on my earlier paper on this subject as well as on the considerations of the Board, including the contributions by Ambassador Ghose and Ambassador González.

1. The fact that nuclear weapons present a permanent danger has been accepted by the world community. The Final Document of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons recognized the danger that existing nuclear weapons could be used. The General Assembly has twice adopted, by about a two-thirds majority, the resolution on reducing nuclear dangers. Significantly, India, Pakistan, and Cuba, which are not signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, have sponsored and endorsed the resolution, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which was not present at the deliberations on the Non-Proliferation Treaty, has also voted in favour of the resolution. With the exception of Israel, which has abstained on the resolution, the whole world community has, in one form or the other, adopted the position that nuclear weapons are dangerous, the different language and objective of the above documents notwithstanding.

2. Nuclear dangers are by nature transnational. In all likelihood, the consequences of a nuclear explosion, not to speak of a nuclear exchange in war, would not be confined within national borders or to the territories of the warring parties. From the inevitable harm that would be done to bystanders not involved in the conflict, and even less so in an accident, flows an obligation by the possessors of nuclear weapons to do their utmost to prevent the dangers from occurring. Nuclear weapons, for that reason, are not just a matter for national security policy. Already, in its 1996 advisory opinion, the International Court of Justice has established that nuclear-weapon States bear the obligation to enter in good faith, and bring to a successful end, negotiations on nuclear disarmament. On the basis of the above considerations, one would wish to add that, pending nuclear disarmament, nuclear weapon possessors are obliged to exert, and are accountable for, their best efforts to prevent nuclear dangers from arising. To be accountable means again that this is not something to be left to national security policy and the ensuing military secrecy alone, but a subject for regular reporting to the international community.

3. Nuclear weapons possessors are not all the same. Some have huge arsenals, while those of others are small. In addition, conventional options may exist for one or the other among them that could substitute for nuclear missions and, in themselves pose a threat to the survivability of the nuclear deterrent of others, in particular if the latter are relatively small. One of them may, in due time, dispose of a national missile defence system capable of denying the capability of small nuclear forces to penetrate to their targets. Some nuclear possessors enjoy a relatively high degree of security and stability, due to their strength or geopolitical situation. Others are weaker and are located in zones of tension and conflict. All these factors add up to quite different degrees of vulnerability and flexibility for changing present postures. As a consequence, different steps might be required from different nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear dangers as far as possible.

4.1 Those States with the largest arsenals, the strongest posture, the best security situation and the most abundant options beyond the nuclear arsenal have the most leeway for deep reductions. One would also argue that, as national missile defences are erected, the fear of a possible first strike would be considerably mitigated if offensive nuclear forces could be reduced proportionally to the capabilities of those defences. Also, curbs on offensive conventional options as they

bear on the survivability of the nuclear forces of others should not be excluded. The strongest States can also afford the highest degree of transparency and voluntary confidence-building measures, such as dismantling of reserve warheads, de-alerting, adopting no-first-use doctrines, or the acceptance of liaison officers in their launch control centres.

4.2 States with smaller arsenals should assume postures eschewing hair-trigger alert while still assuring survivability. The adoption of new communication and readiness practices by the British submarine force after the Strategic Defence Review is a case in point. The weakness therein lies in the fact that it is not really verifiable. Still, it is very much in the interest of the nuclear possessor State itself to ensure that its own posture is as risk-free as possible, as long as survivability is granted. Along the same lines, different de-alerting steps might be possible for other nuclear-weapon States.

4.3 Minimum transparency standards apply to all nuclear weapons possessors. The fact that several of them do not even publicize posture targets, that is, the size of the arsenals they strive for as minimum deterrents is not acceptable. It introduces considerable insecurity and uncertainty into the international community and thereby adds to nuclear danger. That the revelation of very small arsenals as they might exist presently could compromise national security now might be accepted. That the end point of a build-up is not given, however, cannot be justified with security concerns and deviates from the principle of accountability that derives inescapably from the existence of nuclear danger. This represents a clear trade-off between the "uncertainty principle" that some see at the heart of deterrence strategy and the principle of accountability. In this conflict, the accountability principle has to prevail.

4.4 Nuclear possessors in regions of conflict, particularly if in conflict with each other, bear utmost responsibility for defusing their disputes and taking measures to prevent them from erupting into acute crisis situations. Confidence that the existence of nuclear weapons would under all circumstances prevent low-level armed conflict from escalating is not justified. Wars do not evolve along textbook lines, but usually move along unforeseen and often chaotic paths. Confidence-building measures are most appropriate in these circumstances.

4.5 As unauthorized or accidental nuclear explosions and launches and the diversion of weapons and materials to criminal or terrorist uses or to clandestine nuclear weapons programmes are prominent among nuclear dangers, all nuclear-weapon States, big and small, bear responsibility for taking strong efforts to keep their weapons and fissile materials in the strictest and safest custody. A combination of technical and organizational measures is needed. Nuclear weapons possessors should report on these measures in a form that gives reassurance to the international community without compromising the security of their procedures or publicizing weapons-related information.

4.6 Generally, nuclear doctrines should be adapted to the much more relaxed security environment as far as major-Power relations are concerned. Traces of war-fighting and abundant target selection should be abolished forthwith. This would permit a radical trimming of the largest arsenals, to the benefit of international confidence and security. In the course of this development, the decisive reduction of tactical nuclear weapons, which are most vulnerable to the threats alluded to in the preceding paragraph, is a high priority.

5. As for the United Nations, it would appear to me that emphasizing the principle of accountability is the most appropriate effort. The elaboration of specific steps and the means for their implementation is the mission of bilateral negotiations; of the Conference on Disarmament, once the long-sought forum to address nuclear disarmament issues is eventually established; and of the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process, with its particular relationship of mutual undertakings between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. Movement in these forums will only be visible, however, if the nuclear-weapon States accept clearly that their arsenals are not just the subject of national considerations, but imply a threefold responsibility towards the international community: the responsibility to disarm, the responsibility to keep nuclear dangers from arising while disarmament is under way, and the responsibility to be accountable to the rest of the world concerning these two sets of activities.

B. Reducing nuclear dangers: convening of an international conference on reducing nuclear dangers

by Arundhati Ghose

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 55/33 W of 20 November 2000 requested the Secretary-General to continue to seek inputs from the Board "on information with regard to *specific measures that would significantly reduce the risk of nuclear war*, including the proposal contained in the *United Nations Millennium Declaration for convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers*".

2. At the previous meeting of the Board, most members agreed to the need for an international conference as a means "to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers" and "giving high visibility to those urgent needs". There was also general agreement in the Board that emphasis should be given to: de-alerting of nuclear weapons, review of nuclear doctrines, elimination of tactical nuclear weapons, and the need to create a climate for implementing nuclear disarmament measures.

3. In my view, an international conference focusing on some specific areas might provide irreversible steps in the direction of eliminating nuclear weapons altogether, an objective, given the current political realities, which seems not yet in sight. An unfocused, open-ended conference might raise public awareness about the issues but is unlikely to result in any practical steps forward. It is more likely that known positions will be reiterated and the conference might be stalemated even before it started. (The list of issues on which there was no agreement (see A/55/324, annex 6, para. 6) illustrates this point.)

4. A more focused Conference could aim for an umbrella-type, politically binding declaration on eliminating nuclear dangers, with specific agreements to be negotiated, bilaterally or multilaterally.

5. Such an outcome would be facilitated if the conference concentrated on three or four specific areas:

(a) The larger number of weapons, deployed or in storage, strategic or tactical, the greater the risks of theft, smuggling, etc. Therefore, a commitment to *steep reductions* of the numbers of nuclear weapons possessed, in a negotiated timeframe (e.g., by re-energizing the START process), would be a major step. (It has been reported that the United States of America has recently refused to endorse START III levels below 2,000 to 2,500 developed nuclear warheads, despite the expressed desire of the Russian Federation to reduce levels to 1,000 to 1,500 nuclear weapons on each side.)

(b) *De-alerting*. The five nuclear Powers under the Non-Proliferation Treaty have already declared that "none of our nuclear weapons are targeted at any State". Yet some 2,000 nuclear warheads in the United States and the Russian Federation alone remain on short reaction time alert and are thus particularly vulnerable to accidental or erroneous launch. The international community has been emphasizing the need to de-alert nuclear weapons. This step would also, of necessity, include verification measures.

(c) There already exists a global norm against weapons of mass destruction. In the case of chemical and biological weapons, the norm is backed by comprehensive treaties. Even where there is no such comprehensive treaty, in the case of nuclear weapons, I would suggest that there exist a norm against the *use* of nuclear weapons based on a large number of General Assembly resolutions, the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, etc. Conceptually, the task before the conference could be to strengthen the norms against the use of nuclear weapons through, for example, *a global commitment to no first use*. Such a global commitment together with an agreement on de-alerting offer itself as a concrete, pragmatic and practical step forward.

(d) *Review of nuclear doctrines*. Recently (December 2000), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) reaffirmed the "continued validity of the fundamentally political purpose and the principles underpinning the nuclear forces of the allies as set out in the alliance's 1999 Strategic Concept. NATO's nuclear forces are a credible and effective element of the alliance's strategy of preventing war ...". The earlier renunciation by the Russian Federation of its long-standing "no-first-use" pledge and its increased reliance, according to statements made by its leaders, on nuclear weapons to safeguard its national security and national interests, is also cause for concern. Such reviews of doctrines would necessarily be "internal", but a commitment to such reviews with the objective of reducing nuclear dangers can be made at the global level.

(e) An overarching issue is that of *confidence-building measures*. These could be bilaterally/multilaterally agreed, but the conference could identify the most practical and effective confidence-building measures to reduce the risks of nuclear war. Prof. Müller has already suggested doctrinal seminars, crisis prevention/communication centres, warning data exchanges or joint stations, exchanging of liaison officers to strategic command and/or launch centres. The recent agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation on the establishment of a joint warning centre for the exchange of information of missile launches and early warning is a welcome step.

Preparatory process

6. I would propose that the Secretary-General of the United Nations initiate a preparatory process by establishing technical working groups (intergovernmental, with techno-military participation) on each cluster of issues. Bilateral/multilateral informal discussions could be encouraged. Even direct involvement by the Secretary-General himself in the dialogue, to narrow differences, might be required. If the Secretary-General finds that there is sufficient common ground on two or more issues, these could form the foci of the Conference.

7. There is already a large amount of background material on each of these issues. The Secretary-General might even consider inviting specialists to address the working groups, as and when the need arose.

C. Reducing nuclear dangers

by Boris D. Pyadyshev

1. It is sad but true that, since as long ago as 1928, when Maksim Litvinov, who later became the Russian people's commissar for foreign affairs, put forward the term "General and complete disarmament" in the League of Nations[a] and the world leaders wholeheartedly accepted it, the disarmament process has disintegrated into separate disarmament areas.

2. The actual concept of general and complete disarmament did not completely disappear, however. One may recall the solid programme adopted in 1959 by the United Nations General Assembly (I note that its originator was N. S. Khrushchev, who had put forward the main provisions of the programme in a statement at the fourteenth session of the General Assembly).

3. This initiative was followed up. In March of the following year, in accordance with a resolution of the General Assembly at its fourteenth session, the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee began its work, with a mandate from the General Assembly to formulate and submit a plan for freeing the world from weapons of mass destruction. If I am not mistaken, two sessions of the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee were held in Conference Room 8, where our Council met last summer.

4. The fate of the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee clearly confirmed how inseparably the disarmament problem was linked with the overall political situation in the world. In May 1960, there was the well-known incident in the skies over the Soviet Union involving a U-2 spy plane of the United States of America. This led to the cancellation of the Paris summit meeting and, naturally, there could be no question of continuing the work of the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee. At that time, however, it was difficult to remove the issue of general and complete disarmament from the orbit of world politics. The committee was revived as a 15-nation committee (with the participation of the non-aligned countries) and then, as far as I recall, 18 nations. In the end, the Disarmament Commission was established. The outcome of its work, however, is not encouraging.

5. One cannot fail to recall the last bold attempt — the programme put forward by M. Gorbachev in January 1986. It called for the phased renunciation of nuclear and all types of weapons of mass destruction, under a set timetable. It should be noted that this idea of Gorbachev's elicited a broad response. Many people understood that these plans were castles in the air, but it could be the last opportunity, and that was why they found it so hard to let go of that beautiful dream.

6. In the end, we are left with what we have. In his report to the Millennium Summit, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I believe with a heavy heart, said that "for three years in a row now, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has not engaged in any negotiations because its members have been unable to agree on disarmament priorities".

7. And yet, how realistic is the question we are asked: "To what extent should current efforts to reduce nuclear dangers be coordinated with efforts to promote

disarmament efforts involving other weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons, or both? How can the United Nations best promote such an integrated approach?"

8. It is hardly realistic to combine in one programme, established for a fixed period and with fixed stages, the reduction and elimination of weapons of mass destruction, as in Litvinov's concept, or in the General Assembly resolution of 1959, or in Gorbachev's programmes.

9. The times are now very different, but efforts to coordinate the work on various disarmament issues, including that of the United Nations, are by no means hopeless.

10. It goes without saying that it is hardly possible to bring back together under one roof the various disarmament processes which have become autonomous in nature. But it is possible to think about how to combine them more closely at both the practical and the geographical levels. Artificial linkages of different areas of disarmament may be counterproductive because of their specific characteristics and complexity. Nevertheless, progress in one area undoubtedly has a favourable influence on other areas. Therefore, the central task of the international community is to ensure that the work of each disarmament track proceeds as effectively as possible.

11. Without in any way diverting attention from New York as the main centre, it might be advisable to enhance the role of the Disarmament Commission at the organizational level, in particular by holding fairly regular high-level meetings of the Security Council there.

12. Essentially, however fragmented the different areas of disarmament might be, an effective disarmament mechanism has now been established. Its basis is the 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, the regimes for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, and other agreements. This mechanism will be strengthened if, in particular, the use of enriched uranium and pure plutonium for peaceful nuclear energy is prohibited. Technologically this is entirely feasible. The incineration of plutonium and other radioactive elements will provide the prerequisites for finally resolving the problem of radioactive waste.

13. The United Nations cannot ignore the facts of the spread of radioactive materials used for peaceful purposes to means of destruction and weapons of war. It appears that this happened when depleted uranium was used in the recent military operations in the Balkans, leading to human casualties.

14. It should be noted that the subject of disarmament is far from prominent in the mass information media. This situation is disastrous for any issue, and particularly for an issue as important as disarmament. The level of cooperation with the press must be substantially increased; it should not be confined to traditional types of contacts, and the most prominent and authoritative journalists and television commentators must be enlisted. Annual prizes should be established for the best coverage of the role of the United Nations in the processes of disarmament.

Notes

[a] In 1928 the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was not yet a member of the League of Nations, and M. Litvinov was not a people's commissar.

Annex II

Discussion papers prepared by Harald Müller and Maleeha Lodhi and presented on 27 July 2001 at the thirty-seventh session of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters in Geneva

A. Reducing nuclear dangers

by Harald Müller

Nuclear dangers and nuclear disarmament

1. Nuclear dangers are inherent in the existence of nuclear weapons. While the biggest danger is, of course, that nuclear weapons might be used in war, the risks to health and the environment connected to the testing, production and operation and maintenance of nuclear weapons should also be recognized.

2. Missile defences are not reassuring as an instrument for reducing nuclear dangers internationally. Unless the introduction of defences is accompanied by very deep cuts in offensive nuclear forces and is designed in such a way as to reassure other States, they might drastically change the calculus of retaliatory capabilities after the absorption of a first strike. Hence it is probable that missile defences will trigger high-alert postures and offensive counter-deployments by States that fear that their deterrent might be compromised. In this way, they serve rather to enhance than to diminish nuclear dangers.

3. The only reliable way to eliminate nuclear dangers is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. All other attempts to reduce nuclear dangers by deterrence, defence, non-proliferation, physical security and technical controls are attempts at managing, but not eliminating, nuclear dangers.

4. The complete elimination of nuclear weapons will require:

- Strict and effective verification;
- Prompt and effective measures to deal with rule-breaking;
- Prompt and effective measures to deal with the proliferation, the use or threat of use of other weapons of mass destruction;
- The elimination of the possibility that a rule-breaker could prevent the international community from adopting or implementing these measures.

5. Pending the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, certain measures can help to reduce nuclear dangers in the interim. It has to be emphasized that these measures are not a replacement for nuclear disarmament, but just what they are called: interim measures while nuclear disarmament proceeds. In that context, it has to be emphasized that further nuclear proliferation is both a direct contribution to enhancing nuclear dangers and a serious impediment to nuclear disarmament.

Interim steps to reduce nuclear dangers

Reductions

6. Nuclear dangers rise with the growth of nuclear arsenals and diminish with their shrinking. Deep cuts in nuclear weapons are therefore welcome. Unilateral reductions not embedded in legally binding instruments are insufficient means for the reduction of nuclear dangers. While such reductions can be very useful in accelerating the disarmament process, they will help only if they are codified later and supplemented by strict and effective verification. All nuclear possessors should join the disarmament process as early as possible. Because of their particular risk, the elimination of tactical nuclear weapons should give high priority. Pending their elimination, nuclear possessors holding such weapons should reduce them to the lowest number compatible with present doctrine and consolidate them in a few storage areas with the highest physical security.

De-alerting

7. Nuclear postures should be turned away determinedly from high-alert status. Where high alert is related to a relationship of deep mistrust and high conflict, Governments are obliged to work out a policy of détente that would make it possible to reduce such mistrust and manage conflict with instruments other than deterrence postures based on hair-trigger postures.

Doctrines

8. Nuclear doctrines should be reviewed with a view to de-emphasizing the role of nuclear weapons, scrutinizing missions assigned to nuclear weapons and eliminating such missions or assigning them to conventional weapons wherever possible. Doctrines of first use should be abandoned; nuclear possessors adhering to such doctrines should be accountable for their rationales and bear the responsibility of working to remove the impediments to adopting no-first-use doctrines quickly. Other States should be obliged to assist, when possible, the nuclear possessors to move in that direction.

Transparency

9. Transparency with regard to nuclear capabilities is both a precondition for progress in nuclear disarmament and a process driven, in turn, by this progress. By enhancing confidence and mutual trust, increasing transparency helps to contain nuclear dangers. While it has to be recognized that different degrees of transparency might be appropriate for different sizes of nuclear arsenals at the beginning of the process, no nuclear-weapon processor can escape the requirement of providing at least for minimum transparency and thereby contributing to the process of mutual confidence-building.

Public education

10. Efforts to reduce nuclear dangers and to proceed with nuclear disarmament will only be upheld continuously if the public is aware of the dangers and persists in requesting the political leadership to take effective steps towards this objective. A well-informed public is thus the prerequisite for the reduction of nuclear dangers. This points to the importance of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation education.

Possible benefits of an international conference

11. An international conference could be useful precisely because the subject is contested. The objective of such a conference would probably not be so much to achieve a consensus as to start a process of free exchange of opinions and an exploration of steps that could be followed. Such a conference could address, inter alia:

- Present nuclear doctrines, the prerequisites for de-emphasizing nuclear weapons and turning to no first use, and possible steps to implement these prerequisites;
- The relationship between unilateral and legally binding nuclear arms reduction;
- Steps in de-alerting;
- Measures of transparency and mutual confidence-building;
- Missile defence and its impact on nuclear dangers;
- Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation education, probably on the basis of the report of the Expert Group.

B. Reducing nuclear dangers

by Maleeha Lodhi

1. Ironically, the end of the cold war heightened nuclear dangers rather than reducing them. The Advisory Board's interesting discussion at its thirty-sixth session identified a number of measures to arrest the nuclear danger. To be relevant, the Board's recommendations should be responsive to the emerging strategic, political and technological realities in the nuclear field.

2. Among these realities is the fact that, despite best endeavours to the contrary, the reliance on nuclear weapons by the nuclear-weapon States and their allies is stronger than ever. Moreover, nuclear deterrence doctrine has gained at least three new adherents: India, Pakistan and Israel. Secondly, the stability of nuclear deterrence, both among the major Powers and at the regional level — in South Asia, the Middle East and North-East Asia — is less certain and indeed could become volatile for several reasons. The present paper seeks to identify the main sources of the emerging nuclear danger and to propose steps at various levels to reduce them. These steps are the essential interim measures on the road to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

1. Missile defence and strategic stability

3. The most serious nuclear challenge may arise from technological and policy decisions that threaten strategic stability. There is a general concern that unilateral deployment of missile defence systems and the abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty may

provoke a major new arms race and heighten political tensions between the United States of America and the Russian Federation — China, apart from eroding the existing negotiated structures of arms control and non-proliferation. The nuclear danger will seriously intensify if the unilateral deployment of strategic missile defences leads the Russian Federation to re-MIRV its strategic missile systems. Similarly, if ballistic missile defence is pursued unilaterally, at the regional or global level, this could still evoke a major Chinese build-up of strategic, theatre and tactical nuclear weapons systems.

4. It seems essential to address the missile defence issue through a broad-based consultative process involving all interested parties. The recent agreement (22 July 2001) between the United States and the Russian Federation to pursue a dialogue on the issue, involving a discussion of the role of both offensive and defensive systems, is a welcome development. In the past, the Russian Federation had proposed that "balance" could be achieved through a mix of strategic offensive and defensive weapons. It is uncertain whether Moscow could agree now to this approach to maintaining "strategic stability", i.e., with limited deployment of strategic missile defences being accompanied by drastic reductions in strategic offensive weapons.

5. However, a United States-Russian "deal" on an offensive-deployment "balance" may be a necessary but insufficient condition for global strategic stability, since China appears unlikely, at the current stage, to accept the deployment of ballistic missile defences, at the strategic or theatre level, without resorting to a major build-up of its "offensive" weapons systems. Thus, the introduction of missile defences without a broad international consensus could not only destabilize "strategic stability" but also intensify nuclear instability in the regions where such missile defences might be introduced, i.e., the Taiwan Straits, North-East Asia and possibly South Asia.

6. If the move to explore the possible role of missile defences is not to intensify the nuclear danger, it appears essential that it should be pursued as a collective project to promote "cooperative security" rather than as a quest for unilateral strategic advantage by the United States. Therefore, the "dialogue" agreed at Genoa should include, besides the United States and the Russian Federation, all other "relevant" States, including China, as well as India, Pakistan, Israel, Japan and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies. The purpose should be to evolve and agree on: (a) a concept of a possible mix of offensive and defensive systems, at the strategic and regional levels, that could enhance the stability of nuclear deterrence rather than erode it; and (b) a joint process of research and development designed to evolve this within the framework of cooperative security.

7. While such a dialogue is under way it would be essential for the existing treaty obligations, especially under the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, not to be abrogated, including in the testing of ballistic missile defence systems. The prospects of an eventual agreement would be enhanced if the largest number of countries were invited to participate in the research and development efforts to be undertaken on strategic and theatre ballistic missile defence systems.

2. Nuclear reduction by the United States and the Russian Federation

8. The existence of thousands of nuclear weapons in the arsenals of the United States and the Russian Federation continues to pose the threat of inadvertent or accidental use. Even as the dialogue on cooperative security is proceeding, the United States and the Russian Federation should pursue a "START II-plus" Agreement that could seek to reduce their offensive strategic systems to less than 1,000 each.

9. An important positive step would be the widely recommended elimination of tactical nuclear weapons by the United States and the Russian Federation as a means of promoting nuclear stability and reducing the risk of use of nuclear weapons.

10. To facilitate nuclear disarmament and enhance nuclear stability, assurances may be necessary from the United States that it is not seeking to develop new and advanced designs of nuclear weapons, so-called "fourth generation" weapons, including "low-yield nukes" for battlefield use. The development and deployment of such weapons would erode the firewall between conventional and nuclear weapons and increase the danger of nuclear escalation in the event of a conflict.

11. Meanwhile, the Russian Federation needs to continue to enhance its "custodial controls" over fissile materials, nuclear warheads and other sensitive nuclear materials and technology. This could continue to be assisted by the United States and the international community.

3. Review of NATO nuclear doctrine

12. The continuing adherence of NATO to the "first use" of nuclear weapons appears unnecessary in the post-cold war realities, when its members do not face a superior conventional force.

13. The practice of "nuclear sharing" among NATO allies widens the circle of States which "possess" nuclear weapons, thus increasing the possibilities of use, by design or accident. In the current military circumstances, NATO nuclear sharing poses an unnecessary risk, apart from being contrary to the spirit and letter of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

14. It is equally essential for NATO to explicitly disavow the (implicit as well as explicit) threat to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States which may use or threaten to use chemical or biological weapons. This would be a disproportionate response which could unleash nuclear war. NATO allies have non-nuclear means to deter the use or threat of use of chemical weapons or biological weapons.

4. Collective measures by the nuclear-weapon States

15. To reduce the danger of nuclear war in practical terms, several measures for nuclear and political self-restraint need to be evolved by all the nuclear-weapon States, i.e., the five nuclear-weapon States under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the three nuclear-weapon States outside the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime — India, Israel and Pakistan. These measures should include the following:

(a) Maintenance of nuclear arsenals and delivery systems on de-alert status (including de-mating, dismantling, locational separation of warheads and delivery systems etc.);

(b) Transparency measures to enhance mutual confidence and stability;

(c) Avoidance of conventional threats to each other's security (and promotion of deterrence through balance in conventional forces);

(d) Effective mechanisms to address and resolve outstanding political disputes and causes of tension;

(e) Adoption of other military and political confidence-building measures.

5. A viable non-proliferation strategy

16. Non-proliferation can be rendered more effective if it is premised on a more equitable and realistic basis. First, the endeavour to transform the three nuclear-weapon States outside the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime into non-nuclear-weapon States under the Treaty is unrealistic. It hinders the adoption of realistic measures to prevent further proliferation and to stabilize the security environments in the regions of South Asia and the Middle East.

17. Secondly, the security and economic benefits of adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty by the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty need to be greatly enhanced. Among other measures, they deserve to be provided unconditional positive and negative security assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and against military aggression in general. Also, the promise of peaceful nuclear cooperation contained in the Non-Proliferation Treaty must be fulfilled.

18. Thirdly, suspicions about the development of nuclear weapons, or other weapons of mass destruction, by some of the parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the so-called rogue States, need to be addressed through the considerable legal measures provided for in the Non-Proliferation Treaty rather than being combated by coercive "counter-proliferation" measures which are likely to evoke defiant behaviour from such States and increase the risk of "asymmetric" responses.

6. Specific regional measures

19. Each region requires a specific political and arms control approach to reduce the nuclear danger.

(a) South Asia

20. For good reason, South Asia has been described as the most dangerous place on earth. Despite the "nuclearization" of South Asia, there are several measures which can be taken to reduce the threat or use of nuclear weapons. These include:

(a) Agreement on a regime for mutual nuclear and conventional restraint between India and Pakistan. This could involve: a disavowal of the deployment of large numbers of nuclear weapons/delivery systems; agreed limits on the range and numbers of nuclear-capable missiles; maintenance of nuclear assets on

de-alert status; a moratorium on the induction of anti-ballistic missile systems; the maintenance of a balance on conventional forces; and implementation of confidence-building measures;

(b) A treaty disavowing the use or threat of force by India and Pakistan;

(c) An effective mechanism, bilateral and/or plurilateral, to address and resolve the Kashmir dispute and other outstanding issues between India and Pakistan;

(d) A modality for cooperation with the non-proliferation regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, with a view to implementation of the obligations under articles I and II of the Treaty by India and Pakistan;

(e) International assistance to the two countries to enhance the effectiveness of command and control and such measures as stockpile safety, nuclear emergency search/response mechanisms, permissive action links for warheads and personnel reliability programmes.

(b) The Middle East

21. It is necessary to evolve a political modality to reconcile the possession of nuclear weapons by one State with the security requirements of other States of the region. This could take various forms, e.g., international constraints on regional nuclear capabilities or, more realistically, effective security guarantees to its neighbours by one or more of the nuclear-weapon States of assistance in the event of the threat or use of nuclear weapons or the use of conventional forces.

(c) North-East Asia

22. The best approach to reduce the nuclear danger in this region would be to promote reconciliation and peace on the Korean peninsula. This could lead to agreed measures of reassurance against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear-capable missile systems. Coercive approaches to promote non-proliferation may run counter to the emerging trends towards political reconciliation.

7. A global policy to reduce nuclear danger

23. To be effective and mutually reinforcing, the measures outlined above should be promoted simultaneously within a coherent framework. To this end, their consideration by an international conference, as proposed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, could be a first step towards such coordinated political action.

Annex III

Members of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

H.E. Mr. Nabil Fahmy (Chairman)[a, b]
Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United States of America
Washington

H.E. Mr. Vicente Berasategui[b, c]
Ambassador of the Argentine Republic to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
London

Mr. Pascal Boniface[a, b]
Director
Institute of International and Strategic Relations
Paris

Mr. Rolf Ekéus[a, b]
Chairman, Governing Board
Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
Solna, Sweden

Mr. Shai Feldman[a, b]
Head, The Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies
Tel Aviv University
Tel Aviv

H.E. Ms. Arundhati Ghose[a, b]
Ambassador and member, Union Public Service Commission
New Delhi

H.E. Mr. Guillermo Enrique Gonzalez[d]
Ambassador of Argentina to the United States
Washington

H.E. Mr. Raimundo González[a, b]
Ambassador of Chile to Austria
Vienna

H.E. Mr. Kostyantyn I. Gryshchenko[a, b]
Ambassador of Ukraine to the United States
Washington

H.E. Mr. Hu Xiaodi[a, b]
Ambassador of China for Disarmament Affairs
Geneva

Dr. Rokiatou N'Diaye Keita[a, b]
Director, International Institute for Peace and Security
Bamako

H.E. Dr. Maleeha Lodhi[a, b]
Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States
Washington

Ms. Graça Machel[c]
President
Foundation for Community Development
Maputo

Mr. Miguel Marín Bosch[a, b]
Under-Secretary for Asia, Africa, Europe and Multilateral Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mexico D.F.

Mr. Abdul S. Minty[b]
Deputy Director General, Multilateral Department of Foreign Affairs
Pretoria

Dr. Harald Müller[a, b]
Director, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt
Frankfurt, Germany

Prof. William C. Potter[a, b]
Director, Center for Nonproliferation Studies
Monterey Institute of International Studies
Monterey, California, United States

H.E. Mr. Boris D. Pyadyshev[a, b]
Ambassador
Editor-in-Chief, *International Affairs*
Moscow

Ms. Jane Sharp[a, b]
Senior Research Fellow
Centre for Defence Studies
Kings College
London

H.E. Mr. Yoshitomo Tanaka[a, b]
Ambassador
President, Radio Press, Inc.
Tokyo

H.E. Mr. Nugroho Wisnumurti[a, b]
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia to the United Nations Office at Geneva

Ms. Patricia Lewis (ex officio member)[a, b]
Director, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
Geneva

Notes

[a] Participated at the thirty-sixth session.

[b] Participated at the thirty-seventh session.

[c] New member in the thirty-seventh session.

[d] Resigned before the thirty-seventh session.